# ABOUT LABOR

## The Official Report to Washington.

### Succinct Statement of Conditions of Labor in Hawaii, by Wray Taylor.

Following is the continuation of the report of the conditions of labor in Hawaii by the secretary of the bureau of immigration, Mr. Wray Taylor, which was officially transmitted to Washington, under date of December 6, 1899, by the Special Agent of the United States at Honolulu, Mr. Sewall:

**Examinations are Made.**

In order to guard against the introduction of physically feeble and incapable men, each male immigrant is examined by a qualified medical man; in Japan, for the protection of the company; and again in Honolulu for the benefit of the planter. Any ailment sufficient to incapacitate a man for labor or which might reasonably be pleaded as probable excuse for idleness, or which at any time may be expected to deprive the employer of service, is cause for rejection. The rejected one, if in Japan, of course is not shipped. If in Honolulu, and the ailment is curable, he is sent to a hospital and receives treatment; if incurable but able to do light work, he is assigned to light easy employment. If incurable and incapable he is returned to his home. All this at the expense of the immigration company.

Now we will suppose the immigrant, single or married, to have fulfilled the legal requirements of his own country, to have safely run the gauntlet of medical inspection and examination and together with his compatriots to have taken steerage passage on a large steamer, the accommodations neither better nor worse, neither more nor less limited than most of this class. It is true there is not much privacy. A sleeping platform; water enough for limited ablutions; food, good enough and ample enough to ward off complaints; and after a generally comfortable voyage to have landed at Quarantine Island with his trunk or basket and bundle, his little all.

**The Last Formalities.**

His stay here is comfortable and not extended, though he is strictly confined and under control. A good bath is the first matter attended to; then a thorough disinfection of his effects and he is housed in large open barracks. His photograph is taken for identification and he is then assigned to a particular corporation.

His final medical examination is the next step in order and if passed we will suppose him to have been taken with his belongings aboard of an island steamer and furnished with a deck passage. This includes a protecting roof or awning over head and a bare deck beneath him. Wrapped in his blanket, a bundle under his head for a pillow he passes the hours of a night and perhaps a day in as comfortable a manner as he may until he is landed at his destination.

**The Question of Lodging.**

The quarters furnished by the plantation are grouped together in camps, located with reference to convenience to work and for the most part with reference to drainage and sanitary conditions.

The kind of building varies with the class of labor. European labor has for a family or for two single men, two rooms in a four roomed cottage. Chinese being single men are housed in barracks with from 6 to 40 men in a room. Single Japanese are often provided for in the same way, sometimes however two only occupying the same room. Married Japanese are furnished with a small room for each family.

These houses are rough frame buildings, shingle or iron roofed with a six-foot wide covered porch extending their whole length. All lately erected buildings are well raised from the ground. Most have walls 8 to 10 feet high from floor to roof-plate. The height of ridge-pole above this is from 4 to 6 feet. Beneath the roof there is no ceiling and when divided into rooms, these are all open at the top and clear space above from end to end of the building. Cottages have partitions reaching the roof. All walls are white-washed. Often the space between the rafters above the roof-plate is left open for ventilation.

**Conveniences Provided.**

These quarters furnish only a shelter and a place to rest. Nothing more is attempted. In barracks where many single men are collected a platform 6 to 8 feet wide and raised 2 feet above the floor runs the length of the building and each man has about 3 feet in width of space for himself to sleep on. The floor space is common property. Again, tiers of shelves 3 feet wide along the sides of the room, sometimes 3 or 4 tiers high, with some slight low partitions give about 3 by 6 feet for a man.

In the family rooms is a platform two feet above the floor taking up about two-thirds of the floor space. On this the family sleep and live at home. The above for the Japanese. The European cottages are often supplied with rude box bedsteads and perhaps a table and bench. All else must be supplied by the laborer. Generally a piece of straw matting serves for a mattress, a blanket or quilt for covering and a hard neck-rest, common to Japan and China, answers for a pillow. Mosquito nettings are a necessity and are found everywhere. The European fills a tick with hay and a pillow of the same with a blanket convinces him that this is all that a healthy man needs for a bed. Comforts and conveniences vary with the ambition and tastes of the laborer, of course measured generally by the length of the purse.

**How Cooking is Done.**

For cooking purposes all kinds of make-shifts find a use. Most characteristic of a Japanese camp is the rude stove made from a kerosene-oil tin or paint-oil drum. Placed upon end, the top is cut off and one side cut down to within 4 to 6 inches from the bottom. This bottom is filled with clay as a bed for fire, and iron rods or pieces of hoop-iron are run through from side to side 6 inches above this to support cooking utensils. All along the edge of the 6 feet porch above mentioned, these little stoves may be seen arranged in front of and convenient to the doors of the respective rooms.

Many plantations provide central cook-houses, with or without ovens, and large caldrons. Some furnish dining-rooms with tables and benches.

Who does the cooking? The wife, for the family and at times for a few single men from whom she receives pay; single men for themselves or club together and hire one of their number to cook for them. Often the plantation furnishes cooks. Wood and water is provided. The latter sometimes from surface wells near the camps but generally through pipes from a distance. Wood is either brought to the door by the plantation or, as in many instances, the laborer is permitted in his leisure moments to supply himself. Sometimes a money equivalent is paid.

**Hot Bath Provided.**

Oriental laborers demand, as a necessity, a hot bath at the close of the day. To supply this demand large wooden tubs, with iron bottom, capable of holding six to eight persons, arranged so that a fire beneath can heat a large body of water, either in the open or under a roof, is supplied either by the plantation, in which case the bath is free, or by some one among the laborers, in which latter case a small monthly fee is paid.

Often-times a small plot of ground is utilized by the laborer for vegecables with the consent of the planter. Few however of the Orientals avail themselves of this privilege. More raise pigs and fowls, and in this way increase their income.

**The Laborers' Food.**

The staple article of diet among Orientals, here as elsewhere, is rice. Chinese add pork, vegetables, and certain Chinese dried, salted and otherwise preserved food imported from their own country. Ducks are in favor with them and tea in quantity is a never failing beverage.

Japanese add beans, in a multitude of varied forms, imported Japanese sauces, vegetables etc. Beef, milk and wheat bread they soon learn to eat and become partial to. Tea is the principal drink.

Europeans do not fare differently from those in their own country.

**The Work Required.**

Contract laborers are expected to do agricultural and mill work. The former comprises; clearing land; cutting wood and brush, grubbing out roots, moving rocks and brush, teaming and plowing, care of horses, ditching, hoeing, irrigating, fertilizing, planting, stripping and cutting cane, loading and unloading cane cars and any other necessary farming operations.

In and about the mill he is occupied in feeding the cane carrier and furnaces, tending any of the mill machinery, handling sugar, loading cars etc.

From the contract labor class the carpenter, blacksmith, engineers and sugar-boilers select their assistants and these, as they learn and become competent obtain higher wages and often command from $30.00 to $60.00 per month.

When the profit sharing system is in practice, contract men, if deserving, are allowed to take these special contracts and have made from $25.00 to $35.00 per month. In a few places men have been allowed to take small pieces of land and cultivate them at their leisure. In order to do this they are compelled to work early and late, Sundays and holidays and the mill buys the cane at a fixed rate per pound.

Between one-third and one-half of the women work in the fields and about the mill at the lighter kinds of labor. There is no compulsion.

They have many ways of earning money in the camp. After attending to their household duties which are few and simple, they find time to wash cook and sew for others. In these ways the woman often can earn more than her husband.

Many of the laborers save quite large amounts of money during the term of their contract. It is not unusual for Chinese and Japanese when leaving for the Orient to have in their possession all the way from $100 to $300 money saved. Some even are credited with larger amounts, and this means a great deal to them in their own country. It is the reverse with others; they have not a cent, are always in debt, and when they wish to return home they have to borrow their passage money from friends.

**The Working Hours.**

The number of hours is settled in the contract, being ten hours in the field and twelve in the factory. The day begins at an hour varying with the season thus taking advantage of the light in the early morning. A rising bell or whistle wakes them at, say, 4:30 a. m. At 5:30 they are ready to proceed to the field and at 6 o'clock the work day commences. From 11:30 to 12 noon is an intermission for lunch in the fields; then work till 4:30 p. m., when work ends and the laborer is either conveyed or finds his own way to his home.

The mill man begins at 5:30 a. m. and is relieved by the night shift at 6 p. m. Overtime is paid for at a contract rate. In some cases time is counted from the time of departure for the field.

**The Wages Paid.**

Wages vary according to supply of labor and in many instances are governed by the price of sugar. The contract price is now $15.00 per month for Oriental and $18.00 for European. Old contracts call for only $12.50 for Oriental, but in most cases a $2.50 bonus is given to these later, conditioned on good behavior. Women receive $7.50 to $10.00 per month. Only actual time spent in labor is paid for. A man receives no pay for enforced idleness, whether caused by sickness or anything else. A plantation official, called a timekeeper, keeps strict account of working time and the pay-roll is made out from his report.

Generally the month's wages are paid on a fixed and convenient day between the 3rd and 15th of every month for the previous calendar month. The individual presents his identifying tag and receives the amount that is to the credit of that number.

Whether in the field or in the mill, the men work in gangs varying in number, and supervised by an overseer who directs their work, corrects mistakes, instructs the ignorant and stimulates the lazy. He leads them out in the morning and gives the signal for cessation at the proper times. The overseers are generally white men and a successful one must be patient, firm, fair, energetic and judicious. Often he is time-keeper and always a monitor. The character of the overseer often will determine whether there shall be contentment or trouble among the laborers.

Force, in constraint, is not allowed and is fast giving place to other methods. Tact, a withdrawal of privileges and recourse to legal fines and imprisonment are the means used. Rewards for good behavior are not uncommon.

**Medical Attendance Furnished.**

The physician employed by a sugar corporation occupies a peculiar position with reference to his patients and his employer. It must be remembered that usually in the rush to make the progress of the work match with the season, the manager demands every available man among his employees and looks with suspicious and jealous eye upon every one who claims exemption through sickness. On the other hand the laborer wishes a day off now and then and often can make more money gambling in the night than working in the day, and if so is scarcely fit for work after a night so spent. Also when bad weather comes or disagreeable work is in progress the tendency is to have a greatly increased sick list. Now, it becomes the duty of the medical man to determine between the really ill and the malingerer, and naturally the malingerer often goes away dissatisfied. The sick are treated at the office if able to present themselves, or at home if more seriously ill. Naturally, among a mixed and a low class of this kind, treatment is unsatisfactory and carried out with very little aid from the patient.

It is becoming now the custom to provide hospitals for serious ailments. I believe there are 14 already maintained principally by plantations. The more common serious ailments are Dysentery, Remittent fever and Beriberi; which may be charged to the water, the food and the opening of new land as well as the stirring up of old accumulated filth. However, the whole range of practice is represented more or less.

**The Actual Conditions.**

To take a general view of the real state of affairs one must consider that every labor camp is a busy hive. Work is going on and work is paid for, and is what they came here for.

Now, what are their hardships? The main one is compulsory work under a master. Here the law compels. At home need held the whip. The expected to work when they came but the comparison with free men, as to compulsion, turns this into a hardship. Generally they are contented. The sewing machine is common in every camp. The tailoress plies her trade. The petty storekeeper, with his room nearly filled with goods, drives his bargains with his countrymen. All day long the simple laundering is in progress. The mother works with her baby near at hand while the older children are at school. The happy chatter of women's tongues does not evidence discontent. There is food enough. A place to eat and sleep and live in, equal in comfort to that they left behind. Conveniences are multiplying. The laborer returns to his home in the evening and every repression is relaxed. Sunday is a day for rest, indeed, in most cases. The barber is in demand. Clean clothes are donned and the pipe and cigarette lend solace. No one would dream of hardship to look in their faces. Discontent is not thought of. (Parenthetically I may remark that a labor camp is no place for a sick person.) For amusements there are wrestling matches, peculiar dramatic entertainments and gambling games with all sorts of counters.

But let some real or fancied grievance break the monotomy and the scene changes. A tin pan is beaten noisily to alarm and summon the camp. The motley camp gathers, generally at night. The leaders harangue their followers and the mob, most of them ignorant of the real cause, rush off to demand redress or punish the offender.

The grievance is generally an assault by the overseer upon some laborer, a fine considered unjust, compulsion used to obtain unwilling work or a privilege withdrawn. The grievance is to the individual and the crowd makes it their own. It is not generally felt very deeply and in most cases a little tact smooths out everything and the even flow of events is again attained.

**Why Laborers Desert.**

The question may be asked, why, if they are contented, do they deert? There are several reasons. Natural causes may render the work disagreeable and extra burdensome; as rain, cold, mud and overgrowth of weeds. A severe overseer will render all discontented and the boldest will desert. Accumulated debt is a prolific cause. Pure laziness is another. The prospect of getting better wages and the allurement of being with friends entices many away from their contract master.

They came here, not to settle and make homes, but in as few years as possible to accumulate sufficient to enable them to return to their native country with capital enough to live on in a manner superior to their own class at home. With this object in view, as a class, they are saving to an extreme degree. A Japanese will live on from $4.00 to $6.00 per month. A Chinaman from $9.00 to $11.00 per month, and a European $11.00 to $13.00. The latter only is likely to be assimilated and become a desirable citizen.

The foregoing is a brief and unadorned statement of facts as found. From these it may be gathered that as a rule plantations furnish all that the law demands, but are not carried on primarily for the purpose of elevating the laborer to the standard of western civilization and morals any more than other corporations. True, it is, that influences in these directions are often present and have marked effect in certain directions. Upon the coolie class of Chinese the effect is not perceptible. Upon the Japanese it is shown in the adoption of any means that promise an increase in money and personal importance. Upon the European, the full effect is marked in steady progress toward anglo-saxon ideals.

Respectfully Yours,
WRAY TAYLOR.
Secretary Bureau of Immigration.

# THE WAR AND ITS ECHOES

(Continued from Page 1.)

road to Colesburg at 1 o'clock at night. We heard someone on the road, and we crept on and on until we got within fourteen yards of them, and we made a charge and captured four of the Dutchmen and fifteen head of cattle and two carts of hay."

**A Woman's View of It.**

An amusing letter which recently appeared in a Dublin newspaper has let a little sunshine into the general gloom of the average personal news relating to the war. It is as follows:

"My Dear Kate: I was so delighted to get your letter. Yes, the war is too horrid for words! And all the nice men gone out, too! I hope you have not had many friends killed yet!

"Edwin's great friend, Baden-Powell, has worked wonders at Pretoria, and richly deserves a V. C. It is simply professional jealousy wanting to relieve him! I see the Boers have cut up all his communications. Just like the spiteful brutes, as they know how we long to hear from him.

"We are all military mad in London. What a fortune the lucky proprietor of the War Cry must be making! We are so delighted they have made Lord Roberts war minister! We know him by sight quite well. You know the men call him 'Bobs.' He is quite a small man; but oh, so darling! Every one is doing something to help the poor soldiers. Mrs. Blank and myself have already made a lot of sunbonnets for the poor Spanish mules, who are unaccustomed to the climate, and suffer horribly. How picturesque they must look stampeding about the Felt! Edwin is furious with the Boers, and threatens to go out himself if they make any more reverses. With best love, affectionately, SOPHIE."

**Boers Stripped the Dead.**

Writing to his aunt in Pollokshaws, describing the battle of Magersfontein, a private of the First Highland Light Infantry says: "They will never print the truth about this battle, for it will never be known. One of our captains, who was killed, was not found till the next day. The Boers took every stitch off him, and he was lying naked when we got him, shot through the head. Three 'Shaws fellows got wounded and died—Guy Caddens, of my regiment; M'Candlish, of the Seaforths, and M'Ewan, of the Argylls. The remainder of the 'Shaws fellows are here and doing well. I was under more fire here in the first ten minutes than I was in altogether on the Indian frontier."

**An Adventurous Scout.**

A Royal Marine of Her Majesty's ship Powerful, in the naval brigade at Modder river, writes to his mother at Rochdale as follows:

"Our scouts report that the Boers have got their wives with them, and that they hold prayer meetings every night. We saw a piece of this work the other day by one of the Colonial scouts which was the most daring thing I've seen yet. This scout rode right along parallel to the Boer trenches, at about 800 yards at the gallop, just to draw the Boer fire and find their position. He swam the river on his horse and rode right into an ambush of them, but on drawing his sword they 'nipped' for their lives. So he kept on for three hours, the Boers snipping at him all the time. You could see dust flying all around his horse, but he lay along his horse's back and never got a scratch."

**What a Battle is Like.**

Any man who has been in a modern fight, where men are being knocked over all around, and says he likes it is, so writes a war correspondent in the Daily News, a liar. In former days it must have been different. The enemy could be seen, the smoke could be seen and the rifle had to be reloaded after every shot. At 1,000 yards you are in comparative safety. The infantry, after receiving one volley, could charge, knowing that until the enemy had loaded again each man was practically safe.

Nowadays that is all changed. Nothing is seen, no man, no smoke. The only thing seen is the dust thrown up by the bullets, like a rainstorm on the surface of the lake, the artillery throwing shells and the shells bursting. In contrast to this is the noise, which is infernal, with occasional lulls it sounds as if a million kettle-drums were being played—a constant tra-ra-ra-ra, with the boom, boom of the big guns and the harsher sound of the pumping of the Maxims, Hotchkiss, Maxim-Nordenfeldts and machine guns in general. The discord is appalling, as every gun has a different sound, and each shell going through the air hums or whistles according to its breed. After a time you can tell what is coming, or, if it is one of your own, what is going.

The most terrifying of the enemy's guns is a sort of Hotchkiss, which fires about five rounds at a time and throws a one-pound shell, which bursts. You are safe nowhere, as a bullet fired at an object at 800 yards which misses, hits and kills at 2,000 or 5,000. It practically means with these rifles that a bullet is never spent until it hits something and remains there. When a bullet strikes you hear nothing. It goes right through a man and probably travels on another 2,000 yards. You hear a grunt or a gurgle and the man collapses and doubles up. Sometimes if hit in the arm or leg he spins round and falls and probably gets up again, as if it is only the shock which knocks him down, and he hardly feels it. The worst thing is a bullet wound in the stomach below the navel, which is mortal. The pain is excruciating, and they howl like a shot hare; it sounds like a child screaming and is horrible.